

Alcoholic Beverage Regulation Administration



Caterer's License Fact Sheet

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The following are selected highlights pertaining to the requirements of a caterer's alcoholic beverage license:

- A caterer is defined as a business entity engaged principally in the processing, preparation, and service of food products which it has prepared especially for the customer for an event, and the service of alcoholic beverages is incidental to the food preparation and service. A Caterer's license shall not be granted to or maintained by entities which only serve snack items. Snack items shall include, but not be limited to, potato chips, popcorn, pretzels, nuts, cookies, and candy. (23 DCMR § 2000.1)
- Holders of on-premises retailer's licenses, class C or D, may also apply for and hold a caterer's license (§ 25-303(a)(2)), but must file a separate application for the caterer's license. (23 DCMR § 2001.4)
- A caterer's license may sell or serve alcoholic beverages on any day and at any time except between the following hours:
 - 2:00 a.m. and 8:00 a.m., Monday through Friday;
 - 3:00 a.m. and 8:00 a.m. on Saturday; and
 - 3:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. on Sunday.
 - on each January 1st, the licensee may sell or serve alcoholic beverages until 4:00 a.m. (§ 25-723)
- A caterer's license applicant must furnish ABRA with a copy of one of the following with their application: (1) District of Columbia franchise tax return; (2) Schedule C if sole proprietor; (3) IRS Form 1120 or 1120S if a corporation; or (4) IRS Form 1065 if a partnership.
- The caterer's license fee schedule is based upon the applicant's current gross caterer receipts in DC, as follows:
 - \$5,000 if annual gross receipts are more than \$1,000,000;
 - \$4,000 if annual gross receipts are between \$500,001 to \$1,000,000;
 - \$3,000 if annual gross receipts are between \$300,001 to \$500,000;
 - \$2,000 if annual gross receipts are between \$200,001 and \$300,000;

- \$1,000 if annual gross receipts are between \$100,001 and \$200,000;
 - \$750 if annual gross receipts are between \$50,001 and \$100,000;
 - \$500 if annual gross receipts are between \$25,001 and \$50,000; and
 - \$300 if annual gross receipts are between \$0 and \$25,000. (§ 25-504)
- Caterer's licenses are valid for 3 years (23 DCMR § 207.1) and the yearly period of licensure extends from April 1 to March 31. (23 DCMR § 207.2)
- The licensed caterer or ABRA licensed manager shall remain on the premises of a catered event for the period during which alcoholic beverages are sold, served, and consumed. (23 DCMR § 2000.2)
- Purchase of alcohol beverages by caterers:
 - For catered events of 100 persons or less – both wholesalers and off-premises retailers Class A may sell alcoholic beverages to licensed caterers.
 - For catered events of more than 100 persons – only off-premises retailers Class A may sell alcoholic beverages to licensed caterers. (§ 25-113(i)(5), and 23 DCMR § 2002.1)
- Licensed caterers must maintain distinct records regarding their purchase of alcoholic beverages. Holders of on-premises retailer's licenses, class C or D, must also maintain separate and distinct records for each license with regard to their purchase of alcoholic beverages. (23 DCMR § 2002)
- Caterers may remove sealed alcoholic beverage containers from the event premises to an approved storage location or return such containers to a Class A licensee (provided the retailer accepts such a return). (23 DCMR §§ 2004.2 – 2004.3)
- Licensed caterers are required to furnish reports to ABRA every 6 months on the following:
 - Quantity of alcoholic beverages sold by unit;
 - Total dollar amount of receipts for sale of alcoholic beverages and food;
 - Subtotals, in dollars and by percentage, for alcoholic beverages and food;
 - The dollar amount expended for the purchase of alcoholic beverages and for food, and the percentage each item represents of the total;
 - These calculations shall exclude all amounts received for taxes and gratuities in conjunction with these transactions, and all amounts, including surcharges, related to the obtaining and providing of entertainment or other goods and services at the licensed establishment. (23 DCMR § 2006)
- Sites where catered events are held may be protested. (23 DCMR § 2008.1) The Board, upon the completion of a catered site protest hearing, may prohibit or place restrictions upon the number, nature, or size of events, or caterers permitted at a site by written order. (23 DCMR § 2008.8) An event site shall not be subject to a catered site protest hearing more than once every two years from the same individual or entity. (23 DCMR § 2008.10)
- The Board may order a show cause, summary suspension, or summary revocation hearing in response to written complaints from the public about a catering event site. (23 DCMR § 2009.1) If the Board determines that disruptive activity or unlawful conduct has occurred at the event site, the Board may place restrictions upon the number, nature, or size of events permitted at a site. If the Board determines that the activity or conduct is the product of the actions of a specific caterer, the Board may fine, suspend, or revoke the Caterer's license. (23 DCMR § 2009.3)

For more information about the caterer's license, please contact the Alcoholic Beverage Regulation Administration, Licensing Division, at (202)442-4423, or e-mail Margaret.Fowler@dc.gov, or visit our web site at <http://abra.dc.gov> for a copy of the application.